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## DoD Presents Final NSPS Regulations to Congress and Publishes Them in the Federal Register

NSPS Program Executive Office (PEO)

**H**on. Gordon England, Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Hon. Linda M. Springer, Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), announced in a news conference on October 26<sup>th</sup> that the Department of Defense (DoD) has presented the final National Security Personnel System (NSPS) [regulations](#) to Congress. This event marks another major milestone in a rigorous design effort that has been ongoing since the spring of last year.

Congress has 30 days to review the final regulations, which are scheduled to take effect on November 28<sup>th</sup>. The changes will ultimately affect 650,000 of the 750,000 employees in the Department. Once adopted, the Department plans to implement the labor relations portion of the system immediately. "The human resources portion—the new pay bands, the pay-for-performance system, etc.—is scheduled to progressively begin in February" of next year, Deputy Secretary England said. The first group, or "spiral," to come under the

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## Special Pay Systems Branch Surmounts Challenges in Order to Meet DoD Activity Needs

Wage and Salary

[E-mail us](#)

**T**he Special Pay Systems Branch of the CPMS Wage and Salary Division establishes special pay covering Federal Wage System (FWS) occupations, General Schedule (GS) positions, and various administratively determined pay schedules. DoD installations may request special pay from the Branch, through their respective Component headquarters.

Procedures for requesting FWS special pay are contained in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Operating Manual, FWS, Subchapter S12. For GS employees, procedures are located in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 530.304.

"The Special Pay Systems Branch will gladly assist managers and field-level HR offices from the beginning or planning stages through to the end result when you need special pay for hard-to-fill positions,"

says Branch Chief Jim Brady. "I can often help ease the process if you contact me early on. For further information or assistance, please call me at (703) 696-1743 (DSN 426-), or click on the 'E-mail us' link."

With a team of only four individuals, the Special Pay Systems Branch develops, approves, and oversees approximately 420 schedules annually. The challenge is that very few schedules are formatted or constructed in the same way.

As the name implies, "special pay" is tailored to meet the specific needs of a particular DoD activity in recruiting or retaining well-qualified employees. Some special pay schedules only require a single rate for a specific occupation, while schedules under title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), for medical occupations resemble regular schedules and consist of numerous grades and steps. Still other schedules, such as

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CPMS' Injury and Unemployment Compensation Division (ICUC) makes a difference for DoD employees who cannot work due to a job-related injury (see profile of ICUC's Susan Atwood, page 6).



## NSPS Aims to Foster Environment Where All Employees Can Excel

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new program will consist of approximately 65,000 employees.

Implementation of the new program entails a very deliberate process, he explained. If problems arise, the Department will adjust the program. "We want the system to work right for everyone," Deputy Secretary England said.

Mary E. Lacey, the program executive officer for the system, noted that setting up the system is enormously complicated. Training is a large part of the system. The Department has already begun training supervisors and human resources specialists on how the system should work. In addition, all DoD employees will receive training on the system, Ms. Lacey said.

OPM Director Springer said the system preserves the principles that protect Federal workers: merit system principles, due process, and veterans' preference. "I can tell you today that all of those have been preserved and have been adequately maintained in these regulations," she said.

OPM was the Department's "primary partner" in developing the new system, Deputy Secretary England said in an October 26<sup>th</sup> memorandum to all DoD employees, "and we have also in-

volved employees, public interest groups, all DoD Components, union representatives, elected officials, and others." He emphasized DoD leadership's commitment to do the following:

- "Provide training and an open environment that supports you through the transition to a performance-based system, encouraging you to take ownership of your performance and success;

- Promote skill development and advancement opportunities as you grow and progress;
- Reward you for performance and contribution to our Nation's defense;
- Transition to a culture where feedback and coaching are a vital part of day-to-day business;
- Ensure you know what is expected of you and have confidence in your manager's ability to

rate you fairly and equitably;

- Preserve your rights and legal protections;
- Streamline dispute processes to resolve issues between management, employees, and/or employee representatives quickly; and
- Respect your collective bargaining rights while meeting the Department's need to act swiftly to execute our mission."

## Special Pay Team Resolves Complex Pay Issues

*(Continued from page 1)*

those for the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), are established as pay bands or rate ranges, i.e., minimum and maximum rates of pay are established for identified positions.

The Special Pay Systems Branch also participates in the foreign national (FN) compensation program by providing technical advice to overseas activities and reviewing the prevailing practices, rates, and compensation methods within each host country. For instance, this spring a Special Pay team member provided on-site technical support to Air Force personnel conducting the annual wage

survey from Lajes Field on Terceira Island in the Azores. Other 2005 trips included conducting a benefits survey in Canada, as well as special Army Corps of Engineers power plant wage surveys in several western states.

With regard to FWS and GS special rates, the Special Pay team reviews and coordinates special pay requests with DoD Components (and other Federal agencies), and then recommends special pay rates to OPM for approval. Special rates may be necessary when a DoD activity has trouble recruiting or retaining well-qualified employees. A remote area, difficult working conditions, or non-Federal employers paying significantly higher rates for

a particular occupation are all circumstances where special pay rates may be warranted.

In summary, the Special Pay Systems Branch team must often resolve complex pay problems by constructing innovative pay methodologies, but the team members would not have it any other way. The variety of programs is interesting and requires an extensive knowledge of pay schedule development, not to mention the ability to "think outside the box."

In the future, the team looks forward to lending its expertise as NSPS unfolds and the Department moves into a new era in human resources management.



## Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: To Join or Not To Join? For Most Feds, Keeping Their Current FEHB Coverage Is Advantageous

### Benefits and Entitlements [E-mail us](#)

**S**tarting on January 1, 2006, Medicare prescription drug coverage will become available to everyone with Medicare, including Federal employees with Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage. Medicare prescription drug coverage is an insurance program provided by private insurance companies approved by Medicare. There are two types of prescription drug plans, as follows:

- Plans that add coverage to the original Medicare plan; and
- Plans that are part of a Medicare Advantage or other Medicare health plan.

All plans will include local pharmacies and cover brand name as well as generic drugs.

As is true of other insurance, people who join a Medicare prescription drug plan will pay:

- A monthly premium (generally around \$37 in 2006, but this amount can change yearly);
- A yearly deductible (up to \$250 in 2006); and
- Part of the cost of their prescriptions, including a co-payment or co-insurance.

Costs will vary depending on the drug plan. Some plans may offer more coverage and additional drugs.

From November 15, 2005, through May 15, 2006, Medicare beneficiaries will have the opportunity to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan. For people who join by December 31, 2005, coverage will begin on January 1, 2006. For those who join after December 31, coverage will be effective the first day of the month after the month they join. Individuals who are

eligible for Medicare but do not enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan by May 15, 2006, and who do not already have prescription drug coverage that is at least equal to the new Medicare coverage, will pay a higher premium if they choose to enroll later.

There are several factors to consider when deciding whether you should join a

Medicare prescription drug plan. It will almost always be to your advantage to keep your current FEHB coverage without any changes. The exception is for those with limited incomes and resources who qualify for Medicare's extra help with prescription drug costs. Please contact your benefits administrator or your FEHB insurer for in-

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## Job Family Standards Will Replace Individual Classification Standards for Scientific and Engineering Occupations

### Classification & Pay [E-mail us](#)

**G**iven the high level of interest in pay banding these days, one might have anticipated that few changes would be made to existing OPM classification requirements. During September, however, three new standards were issued in less than a week's time. One of the new standards is still in draft form, while two others are final standards: the Job Family Standard (JFS) for Professional Work in the Mathematical Sciences Group, GS-1500, and the JFS for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, GS-0400.

Each JFS replaces a number of generally outdated individual occupational standards. They consolidate the professional series and grading criteria in their respective occupational groups into single documents.

Each JFS has series definitions and brief descriptions of the covered occupations, titling instructions, and grading criteria in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format.

Illustrations of key factor levels for several of the occupational series are provided for additional guidance. Each JFS makes some changes, such as re-titling series, canceling some series, and establishing others.

Since the GS-1500 and GS-0400 JFSs are final standards, they must be applied to all covered DoD positions. However, neither JFS is expected to have a significant impact on the DoD workforce.

The third new standard should be of considerable interest throughout the DoD Components: the draft JFS for Technical Work in the

Engineering and Architectural Group, [GS-0800](#). The draft includes updated occupational information and new FES classification criteria for Engineering Technician, GS-0802, and Electronics Technician, GS-0856, as well as several less-populated series.

The Department is not a designated lead agency and thus is not required to test-apply the draft. Nonetheless, we in CPMS are reviewing the positions covered by the draft, and the Department will provide feedback to OPM by the November 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. To that end, CPMS has asked both HR and functional personnel to review this draft carefully and submit comments through Component channels to CPMS no later than November 14<sup>th</sup>.

To access the text of the GS-0400 or GS-1500 JFS, click [here](#).



## Implications for Federal Employees With Elder Care Responsibilities

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formation about your FEHB coverage before making any changes. If you are covered by an FEHB plan and decide not to join a Medicare drug plan now, but change your mind or lose your Federal coverage later, you can enroll without penalty as long as you enroll within 63 days after losing your FEHB coverage.

Many Federal employees have elder care responsibilities, and the elderly are a rapidly growing segment of the population. Therefore, in order to make informed decisions, employees should be aware of the benefits Medicare is offering. If you are a caregiver, or if you help a family member or friend make health care decisions, you need to know about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage.

All people with Medicare should consider this new coverage. In some cases, if your family member or friend gets help from the state to pay for health care costs (like Medicaid), that person automatically qualifies and does not need to apply for extra help. Medicare will send a notice if this is the case.

As a rule, however, coverage is not automatic. To get this prescription drug coverage, most people with Medicare must choose and enroll in a Medicare pre-

scription drug plan that meets their needs. If the person you care for or are assisting has prescription drug coverage through work, he or she will need to talk to the employer's benefits administrator to determine how the current drug coverage will work with Medicare before deciding to enroll.

For more information, read the "Medicare & You 2006" Handbook that you or your family member or friend should have received recently in the mail. This Handbook contains more detailed information about Medicare prescription drug plans, including which plans will be available in your area.

You may also visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and select "Search Tools" to get personalized information, or select "Frequently Asked Questions" to get answers to common questions. A hotline is also available by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). Text telephone (TTY) users should call 1-877-486-2048.

## Contract Is Awarded to Lockheed Martin for Continued DCPDS Operation, Sustainment, and Maintenance

Regionalization & Systems Modernization (REGMOD) [E-mail us](#)

**O**n behalf of CPMS, in September the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) awarded a \$112.6 million maximum, firm-fixed-price contract to Lockheed Martin for continued operation, sustainment, and maintenance of the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS), the DoD civilian HR transaction processing and management information system. DCPDS contains more than 800,000 civilian employee records and 1.5 million position records. It is the largest HR automated system in the world.

CPMS is responsible for functional and technical oversight of DCPDS. Lockheed Martin has provided operations, maintenance, and sustainment of the system since 1999, when the Department first outsourced those areas.

The new contract is a performance-based, five-year contract (base year with four one-year options). As it has done in the past, CPMS will use performance metrics to monitor the new contract. To this end, the contractor will continue to provide quarterly metric-based performance reports to the CPMS Regionalization and Systems Modernization Division (REGMOD). The most recent performance statistics indicate that the contractor's average service level agreement score stands at 4.34 on a 5.0 scale.

The DCPDS contract also contains options for time-and-materials contract line items to support NSPS, covering development work for fiscal years 2006 through 2008, as well as specific Component support for DCPDS-related work. DoD Component contract line items require Component funding. At this writing, the

Army, Air Force, Navy, and DLA have established separate contract line items. Other Components interested in establishing a separate contract line item for DCPDS work may contract Theresa Paddock, DCPDS Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR), at 703-696-1489 (DSN 426-) or e-mail [Theresa.Paddock@cpms.osd.mil](mailto:Theresa.Paddock@cpms.osd.mil).

Lockheed Martin has performed well over the past six years, supporting CPMS in the full deployment of DCPDS. As the technical integrator for DCPDS, Lockheed Martin partnered with CPMS in migrating DCPDS to the web-based version of the Oracle software in 2003.

Now, the contractor continues to support the Department in implementing NSPS. DCPDS is on the critical path for NSPS implementation.





## DoD Conducts Focused Recruiting Through Puerto Rico Career Fairs

### Recruitment Assistance

[E-mail us](#)

The Defense Civilian Recruitment Team (DCRT) recently conducted two career fairs in Puerto Rico, with approximately 400 students attending. Early indications are that many interviews and numerous tentative hires will result from the career fairs. In late October, an on-line survey was sent to DoD recruiters to determine the total numbers of interviews and job offers involved. DCRT conducts focused recruiting as part of the CPMS [Recruitment Assistance Division \(RAD\)](#).

Career fair offerings included workshops on Federal résumé writing and information sessions on

Government job opportunities and benefits. The October career fairs were aimed at recruiting Hispanic professionals in occupations such as engineering, business administration, and nursing. By partnering with local universities, DoD Component recruiters reached out to a population that is underrepresented in the Department and the Federal workforce. Local technical schools, such as the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and UPR Mayaguez, were particularly good sources of high-quality job candidates.

Puerto Rico's unemployment rate now stands at 10.6 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which has reported double-digit unemployment

rates there for all but three months during the past two years. These statistics, plus a local labor market with lower-than-average salaries, created a fertile field for DoD recruiters. It all added up to a win-win situation. Recruiters used the career fairs to showcase DoD careers, and well-qualified candidates responded with enthusiasm.

Previously, RAD co-sponsored a career fair for injured and wounded ser-

vice members and their spouses at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, DC. A similar event occurred in September at Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, TX. The results of these two outreach efforts were gratifying: More than 200 individuals were interviewed, and at least 30 tentative job offers were made. Additional events at other major military medical centers are currently in the planning stages.

## FSA's Stretch Your Care Dollars

Benefits & Entitlements [E-mail us](#)

FEHB open season runs from November 12<sup>th</sup> through December 12<sup>th</sup>. During this period, you may enroll in a tax-advantaged flexible spending account (FSA) as well as health care insurance. There are two types of FSA:

- Health care (HCFSA), which pays for uncovered or un-reimbursed portions of qualified medical costs, including dental care, eyewear, prescription drugs, co-payments, and over-the-counter medications; and

- Dependent care (DCFSA), which lets you pay with pre-tax dollars for eligible expenses, such as child care or care of qualifying parents or other eligible dependents.

Eligible employees may contribute pre-tax income up to \$4,000 for an HCFSA and up to \$5,000 for a DCFSA annually.

To see how much you can save, visit the [FSAFEDS](#) web site, which includes a calculator you can use to estimate your FSA contribution and tax savings.

## Sharon Stewart Is New CPMS Deputy Director for Advisory Services

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, CPMS Director Brad Bunn announced the selection of Sharon Stewart as the new CPMS Deputy Director for Advisory Services, vice Marilee Fitzgerald.

Ms. Stewart has more than 20 years of experience in human resources management, which includes developing and executing policy in all major human resources management areas. She comes to CPMS from the NSPS Program Executive Office, where she was the Director for Human Resources Systems, a Senior

Executive Service position. Ms. Stewart has been instrumental in shaping the design and development of NSPS. Previously, she was a policy expert for the Department of the Navy, where she had oversight responsibility for classification and staffing programs. During the '90s, she worked in the CPMS Civilian Assistance and Re-Employment (CARE) Division.

"Please joint me in welcoming Sharon Stewart back to CPMS in this extremely critical position," Mr. Bunn said.

## CPMS Employment Corner

CPMS vacancies are posted at <http://www.hr.dla.mil/onjams/splash.htm>. From that web page, click on the "Job Opportunity Announcement

Search Page" link, scroll down to "Organization Options," select "Hq/CPMS," and scroll down to announcement numbers that start with "CPMS."



## CPMS Personnel-ity Profile

### ICUC's Susan Atwood Makes a Difference for Injured DoD Workers

Get cash when you're injured and can't work." For most of us, the phrase only calls to mind the noisy duck in a long-running TV ad campaign. For Susan Atwood, however, these words have real meaning. A member of the Injury and Unemployment Compensation Division (ICUC), Susan works in Denver, CO, as the DoD liaison with the Department of Labor's Office of Workers Compensation Program (OWCP), Division of Federal Employees' Compensation (DFEC).

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act provides workers' compensation coverage to Federal civilian workers for employment-related injuries and occupational diseases. DFEC adjudicates new compensation claims and manages ongoing cases; pays medical expenses and compensation benefits to injured workers and survivors; and helps injured employees return to work when they are medically able to do so. Within DFEC, the Denver District Office processes compensation claims filed by workers in six Western states (Colorado, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota).

"As the DoD liaison, I am responsible for civilian employees in this six-state area who are injured on the job," Susan says. "When they file a claim, that claim is actually managed by OWCP. I assist with the

flow of critical information between the injured worker, the employing DoD Component, and OWCP. My office is down the hall from the Denver OWCP District Office, so I have constant contact with claims examiners.

"Next to the Postal Service, the Department of Defense is the Federal agency with the most injury compensation claims, and through ICUC, DoD is the only agency that has liaisons working with the Department of Labor to manage claims." ICUC's unique approach has been highly effective: Federal Employees' Compensation Act payments increased Government-wide by 29 percent during the last decade, while the DoD increase was only 1.6 percent.

"What I do makes a difference for our injured worker who is at home recovering," Susan says. "I work to ensure that injured DoD employees receive all the benefits to which they are legally entitled.

"Every day brings a new challenge. For instance, this year CPMS implemented an exciting new program, Pipeline, that returns to work injured employees who are medically able to perform light duty jobs. Using Pipeline, they no longer have to wait until they can perform the job held on the date of injury.

"Employees are grateful for the opportunity Pipeline gives them to return to work. They also welcome the end of having to deal with workers' compensation, which can often be difficult and frustrating.

Finally, once they return to work, all the time they were receiving compensation becomes time that is fully creditable toward retirement, but if they do not return to work, that time never becomes creditable. So for many employees and their families, returning to work is vital to a secure future. Pipeline may be their financial lifeline.

"I also like the freedom CPMS gives me to do my job. I am able to prioritize my own work flow and schedule my own temporary duty travel to DoD installations. My managers ask me what I need to do my job well. As a result, I have recently received training through on-line courses geared to my specialized needs for my position as a liaison."

Though she is a native of Lincoln, NE, since her teen years Susan has lived in the Denver area, where she raised her family—two sons and a daughter, now grown. She resides in the scenic mountains west of Denver with Gunsmoke, a chocolate

Labrador retriever; Keynes, an Australian shepherd-Border collie mix named after John Maynard Keynes, the influential 20<sup>th</sup> century economist whose theories Susan was studying at the time she adopted the dog; and her newest addition, Mariah, a seven-week-old Australian shepherd puppy.

#### CAREER BRIEF

**EDUCATION.** BA in economics (summa cum laude), University of Colorado at Denver, 1994. Paralegal certification obtained through the Denver Paralegal Institute, an American Bar Association-approved Paralegal program, 1994.

**EXPERIENCE.** 1970s through early 1990s: Positions of increasing responsibility in Research and Development with the **Adolph Coors Brewing Company**, Golden, CO.

1994: Selected through the Outstanding Scholar Program as a GS-7, target 12, Workers' Compensation Claims Examiner with the **U.S. Department of Labor**, District Office 12, Denver, CO. 2001: GS-12 Workers' Compensation Claims Examiner in the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP), also with District Office 12.

2002 to date: GS-12 Human Resources Specialist with **ICUC** in Denver, CO.

